The Inflow of Foreign Remittances in Rural Punjab: The Determinants

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, an attempt was made to analyze two issues relating to the inflow of remittances in the migrant households of rural Punjab. Firstly, the distribution pattern of remittances receiving migrant households as the volume of per household remittances. Secondly, causes of receiving different volumes of remittances by households. The results showed that in short to medium periods, remittances remained a stable and significant source of migrant's household income. In the long term, as more migrants get legal status in the destination country, or their families join them, build their own houses, or start their businesses, they may revise their portfolio choice. The study also found that the high per capita domestic income of the migrant households back at home and the increased stay of the migrants in the destination countries negatively impact the inflow of households remittances. However, there was a positive relationship between the inflow of per household remittances and the number of family migrants abroad. Similarly, illegal migrants send more remittances than legal migrants. The migrants in developed countries send more remittances than migrants of developing countries. The study also found that altruism predominates as more remittances were received from children and spouses than other relatives.

Keywords
Emigrants, illegal migrants, legal migrants, migrant households, remittances.

JEL Codes
C32, F24, P16, R23.

INTRODUCTION

The flow of remittances is considered a transfer payment made by the migrant to his parent household to supply labour services to the destination country. Remittances include both money and goods. Remittances are the driving force behind migration (World Bank, 2005). Remittances are considered as a positive financial inflow akin to those earned through exports. Remittances imply that migrant stays abroad and maintains a significant social link with origin country (Munshi, 2003). However, there is a significant variation in the flow of remittances to the migrant households. These flows of remittances depend upon two things: the magnitude of remittances and the utilization of remittances by the migrant households. The magnitude of remittance depends upon two factors remittable amount and propensity to remit.

First, the remittable amount of remittances depends upon the number of working family migrants abroad and their earning and saving levels. The earning level of the migrant is determined by his education and skill levels, legal status, duration of stay of migrant's abroad and destination country (Merkle & Zimmermann, 1992). The education level of the migrant can lead to a higher amount of remittable remittances. Nayyar (2002) argued that migrant earns more when he has a higher level of education and a higher propensity to remit. Zachariah, Mathew and Rajan (2000) reported that remittances varied according to the educational levels. The remittances of an average degree-holding emigrant were higher than illiterate emigrant.

Durand, Kandel, Parrado, and Massey (1996); Sana (2005), in their study of remittances behaviour of Latin

American immigrants in the U.S., reported a positive relationship between U.S. monthly income and volume of remittances received in their households in origin countries. Similarly, Chowdry & Das (2016) studied the remittances behaviour of Chinese and Indian immigrants and found that the household income of the immigrants in Canada positively impacts the volume of remittances sent back at home. McCracken, Ramlogan-Dobson, and Stack (2017) also found that a higher level of earnings in the destination country spares a higher level of remittance for family members in the origin country. The level of household income in the origin country also determines the need for remittances, but it depends upon whether the altruistic or self-interest motive of the migrant is has improved. Mandelman and Zlate (2011) reported that the flow of remittances depends upon the migrant's household income in the origin country. Beti, Calero, and Sparrow (2008) revealed that remittance flow increases if migrant households face economic shocks.

The destination country of the migrant also influences the flow of remittances as there are significant variations in wages between the developed and developing countries. Average wages in the developed countries are much higher than that of developing countries. It implies that if the destination country of the migrant is a developed country, his income earnings would be higher and hence the higher the remittable amount of money and vice versa.

Second, the propensity to remit is influenced both by micro-economic factors and macro-economic factors. Lucas and Stark (1985) hypothesized that migrant workers are motivated to remit for various reasons, ranging from pure altruism to pure self-interest at the micro-level. Migrant workers can be classified as altruistic if their remittances increase with the decline in their family income at home. At the same time, self–interest motives would be considered dominant if remittances were positively related to family income and household's assets at home after migration. The propensity to remit is also influenced by the migrants' connection with the relatives staying home. Migrants may send more remittances to their parents if they want to return home and wish to accumulate assets (Brown, 1997), acquire home, land, smoothen consumption, diversify income, and earn goodwill in the home area (Rosenzweig & Stark, 1989).

The legal status of the migrant also influences the propensity to remit. The illegal status of the migrants in the destination countries forces these migrants to remit most of their earnings in the destination country back home. The fear of being deported or investigated may be prompting the illegal migrants to remit their entire savings to their family members. Amuedo-Dorantes & Pozo (2005, 2006) find that migrants send a larger volume of remittances back home if they face uncertainty in the host country. In contrast, Lucas (2005) posited that there is little evidence to indicate whether illegal migrants remit as much as legal migrants and reported that legal migrants command higher pay and have less difficulty in sending remittances. Thus, one would expect larger transfers from legal migrants.

Nevertheless, it is possible that once the legal migrants get assimilated, they would either stop remitting or, at the most, might be sending a lesser amount of remittances. Besides, the legal migrants are often accompanied by their families, which may stop or reduce remittances. The decision to remit is influenced by whether the migrant has migrated alone or as a family. Whether he wants to settle permanently in the host country or return home after some time. If family members accompany the migrant, remittances will decline (Galor & Stark, 1990).

Migrant, while remitting money, thinks that his money is used rationally so that remitted money increases the welfare of his household. The rational utilization of remittances depends upon the rationality of the user of remittances. The rationality depends upon the education level of the household head. Thus, it implies that the education level of a household head positively impacts the inflow of remittances in the migrant household. The main objective was to analyze the determinants of the variation in the inflow of remittances in the migrant households of rural Punjab.

METHODOLOGY

To research answers to the above research issues from rural Punjab, at the empirical level, a survey was conducted for collecting primary data because the information from secondary sources is either limited or sketchy. The survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews with the heads (acting or otherwise) of the sampled households. Regression analysis was applied to study the effect of various determinants on annual per household remittances

Specification of Models

To estimate the roles of the above listed quantitative and qualitative variables in determining the volume of per annual household inflow of remittances in the migrant households, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) regression models, Simple Regression model and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) model were used. The

Analysis of Covariance models (Model 1 and 2) contained an admixture of both ratio scale variables (quantitative variables) and nominal scale variables (also called indicator variables, categorical variables, qualitative variables, or dummy variables). These models are also called covariate models. For bivariate models, Simple Regression model (Model 3) for quantitative variables; and Analysis of Variance (Model 4) for qualitative independent variables were used. In model 4, intercept to avoid the problem of falling into a dummy trap was dropped.

Model 1

$$Log\ (Y_i) = \alpha + \beta_0\ X_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + d_1 D_1 + d_2 D_2 + d_3 D_3 + d_4 D_4 + d_5 D_5 + e \qquad (1)$$

Model 2

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_0\ X_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + d_1 D_1 + d_2 D_2 + d_3 D_3 + d_4 D_4 + d_5 D_5 + e \qquad (2)$$

Model 3

$$Log\ (Y_i) = \alpha + \beta_0 X_i + u \qquad (3)$$

Model 4

$$Y_i = d_i D_i \ \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots \qquad (4)$$

Where Y in equations 1- 3 is the annual per household remittances received in cash and kind by households, or zero if the households receive no remittances. The independent variables are listed as follows:

X_o = Domestic per capita income at home (₹Lakhs)

X_1 = Number of working members abroad

X_2 = Education Level of the migrant (Years of education)

X_3 = Duration of Stay of family migrant(s) abroad (Years)

X_4 = Duration of Stay of family migrant squared (Years)

X_5 = Education of household head (Years of schooling)

D_1 = Legal status of migrants abroad (Dummy: illegal = 1; legal = 0)

D_2 = Destination country of migrant (Dummy: Developed country-1; developing country--0)

D_3 = Sex of household head (Dummy, male=1, female=0)

D_4 = Remittance senders [(Dummy: Procreation relations (Children and Spouse) = 1; Orientation relations (Brothers/sisters and parent) = 0)]

D_5 = Settlement and assimilation of family migrants in destination (Dummy: Permanently settled and assimilated in the destination country = 1; otherwise = 0)

e = Error term

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Migrants

The international migration theories and empirical evidence showed that human capital, physical and financial characteristics related to individual migrants and their households played a significant role in the flow of international migration and remittances. These characteristics are presented in Table 1. Nearly 30 per cent of the migrant households were illegal migrant

Table 1. Human and general characteristics of individual migrants and migrant households

Characteristics	Legal migrant households	Illegal migrant households	All migrant HHs
Types of migrant households (Per cent)	71.3	28.9	100.0
Migrants originated from (Per cent)	66.3	33.7	100.0
Average numbers of working family migrants abroad	1.5	1.8	1.6
Education Level of the Migrants : Up to secondary education	81.6	88.5	84.0
University education (Per cent)	18.4	11.5	16.0
Total (per cent)	100.0	100.0	100.0
The average stay of migrants abroad (Years)	15.2	14.3	14.9
Destination countries of migrants			
Developed countries (Per cent)	51.6	100.0	67.9
Developing countries (Per cent):	48.4	0.0	32.1
Total (per cent)	100.0	100.0	100.0
The average age of the migrants at the time of migration (Years)	27.5	25.6	26.9
Families living with migrants in destination countries (Per cent)	33.0	Nil	21.9
Education of household head (Years of schooling)	7.9	8.3	8.0
Households headed by male members (Per cent)	60.4	73.0	66.3
Average size of landholdings (Acres)	4.7	4.3	4.5
Domestic per capita income per year (₹)	233,190	159,000	210,000

Source: Sample survey conducted in winter 2018.

households. The average numbers of working family migrants abroad per household were higher from illegal migrant households (1.8) than legal migrant households. The education level of legal migrants was better than illegal migrants. Similarly, the stay years of legal migrants (15.2 years) and the average age of legal migrants (27.5 years) was higher than illegal migrants with stay (14.3 years) and average age of legal migrants (25.6 years).

Interestingly, the legal migrants migrated to developing countries, whereas all the illegal migrants moved to developed countries. As expected, 33.0 per cent of legal migrants had their families living with them in the destination countries, and no illegal migrants had their families with them in the destination countries. The characteristics of migrant households also provided interesting insights. The head of illegal migrant households (8.3 years of schooling) was slightly higher than that of legal migrant households (7.9 years of schooling). Interestingly, three-fourths (73.0 per cent) of illegal migrant households were headed by male members, whereas only three-fifths (60.4 per cent) of legal households were male. However, the average size of landholding (4.7 acres) and domestic per capita income per year (₹233,190) of legal migrant households was higher than illegal migrant households with an average size of land holdings (4.3 acres) and domestic per capita income (₹159,000).

Distributions of Migrant Households as per the Amount of Remittances Received Per Household

The migrant households do not receive an equal amount of remittances. There was a considerable variation in the amount per household remittances received. The results presented in Table 2 showed that nearly 7 per cent of the migrant households did not receive any remittances during the last 12 months. Four out of ten (42.1 per cent) migrant households received remittances up to ₹5 lakhs per household. Nearly one-sixth (15.5 per cent) of the households received between ₹5 to 10 lakhs, one-fifth (19.2 per cent) of the households received between ₹10 to 15 lakhs, one-tenth (10.8 per cent) of the households received ₹15 to 20 lakhs, more than 3 per cent of the households received between ₹20 to 25 lakhs and even more than 2 per cent of the households received above ₹25 lakhs.

There was also considerable variation in the proportions of different categories of migrant households receiving different volumes of remittances. Of the legal migrant households, 7 per cent of the households did not receive any remittances during the last 12 months, more than three-fifth (64.3 per cent) received up to ₹5.0 lakhs, one-seventh (14.1 per cent) received between ₹5-10 lakhs, more than one-tenth (10.3 per cent) received between ₹10-15 lakhs, 3 per cent received between ₹ 15 - 20 lakhs, 1.0 per cent received between ₹20-25 lakhs, and no household received remittances above ₹25 lakhs. Of the illegal migrant households, like legal migrant households, 7 per cent of the migrant households did not receive any remittances during the last 12 months. More than one-ninth (12.3 per cent) received up to ₹5.0 lakhs, one-sixth (17.4 per cent) received between ₹5-10 lakhs, nearly one-third (31.2 per cent) received between ₹10 to 15 lakhs, a little above one-fifth (21 per cent) received between ₹15 to 20 lakhs, nearly 7 per cent received between ₹20 to 25 lakhs, and even more than 5 per cent received above ₹25 lakhs.

The remittance-receiving migrant households displayed a normal distribution pattern of per household

Table 2. Distribution of legal and illegal migrant households as per the amount of remittances received

(₹ lakhs)

Per households remittances received	Legal migrant households		Illegal migrant households		All migrant households	
	Numbers	Percent	Numbers	Percent	Numbers	Percent
Nil	13	7.0	09	6.5	22	6.8
0-5	119	64.3	17	12.3	136	42.1
5-10	26	14.1	24	17.4	50	15.5
10-15	19	10.3	43	31.2	62	19.2
15-20	6	3.2	29	21.0	35	10.8
20-25	2	1.1	09	6.5	11	3.4
Above 25	0	0	07	5.1	07	2.2
	185	100.0	138	100	323	100.0

Source: Sample survey conducted in 2018.

remittances, that is, as the volume of per household remittances increases, the proportion of households receiving remittances increases, reaches at the highest level in the middle of per household remittances, and after that the proportion of remittances receiving households declined. Similarly, the illegal migrant households displayed a normal distribution pattern of remittances received, that is, as the per household remittances increased, the percentage of remittances receiving households increased, it reaches the highest level and then starts declining. However, there was a distinct pattern among the legal migrant households. The legal migrant households displayed a positively skewed distribution pattern of remittances received, that is, most of the legal migrant households was receiving a lower level of per household remittances. Why there was a distinct phenomenon of per household remittances received between the legal and illegal migrant households? Surely

it needs explanation. The answer to this phenomenon can be found in the determinants of the inflow of remittances.

Functional Analysis

The estimated multiple regression and β-coefficients and simple regression coefficients of per household remittances for all the migrant households are reported in Tables 3 and 4 with t-statistics for a zero null hypothesis. The results derived using Equations 1 and 3 are presented in Table 3, and those derived from using Equations 2, 3, and 4 are presented in Table 4. Theoretically, in the time series data, the value of R- square should be near 0.9 for the model to be a good fit, and for cross-sectional data, R^2 should be near 0.5. Based on this argument, we can say that our multiple regression model (Model 1) was a good fit because our sample data was cross-sectional, and the value of R^2 in this model was near 0.6 (Table 3). The value of R^2 was just 0.248 in model 2, so we preferred Model 1 and interpret the results presented in Table 3 only. The

Table 3. Estimated remittance equations-Dependent variable: Log of amount of remittances

Explanatory variables	Regression coefficient	Beta value	Bivariate regression coefficient
Domestic per capita income at home	-0.085* (-1.734)	-0.074*	0.046[NS] (0.712)
Number of working members abroad	1.170*** (3.209)	0.144***	0.235[NS] (3.646)
Education level of the migrant	0.022[NS] (1.402)	0.057[NS]	0.096*** (4.682)
Duration of stay of migrant abroad	0.066*** (3.811)	0.475***	0.034*** (4.485)
Duration of stay of migrant Square	-0.001*** (-2.286)	-0.286***	0.001*** (2.804)
Education of household head (Years of schooling)	0.035*** (3.539)	0.138***	0.0161*** (4.443)
Sex of household head (Dummy: Male = 1, Female = 0)	-0.131[NS] (-1.553)	-0.084[NS]	0.239** (1.916)
Relation abroad: (Dummy: Children and spouse = 1, for others = 0)	0.599*** (5.297)	0.210***	0.599*** (3.839)
Legal status of migrant (Dummy: illegal = 1; legal = 0)	0.244** (1.937)	0.126**	1.215*** (11.738)
Destination country of migrant (Dummy: Developed countries = 1, Developing countries = 0)	1.206*** (8.573)	0.141***	1.290*** (12.765)
Settlement and assimilation of migrants in host country (Dummy: Permanently settled and assimilated = 1, Otherwise = 0)	-0.991*** (-8.216)	-0.374*	-0.288** (-1.958)
Intercept	-1.048* (-5.166)		
R^2		0.598	
No. of observations		323	

Source: Sample survey conducted in winter 2018.
Figures in brackets are t-values.
***, ** and * Significant at 1, 5, and 10 per cent level.
NS: Non-significant.

results derived from the multiple and bivariate regression models are represented in Table 3 and 4. The bivariate model showed the gross effect, and multiple regression models the pure effect. When there was a contradiction in results derived from the multiple and bivariate regression models, results derived from the multiple regression model was interpreted.

One of the most important motives for remitting money was pure altruism-the care of a migrant for those left behind. The kernel of pure altruism was the per capita domestic income of household members living at home. The pure altruism model hypothesized that there should be a negative relationship between per household remittance received and the per capita domestic income. Our multiple regression and β-coefficients confirmed it. In other words, it confirmed our theoretical arguments presented above. As expected, regression and β coefficients relating to the number of working members

abroad indicated that there is a strong positive relationship between the number of family working members abroad and the inflow of remittances in the migrant households. As the number of working members' abroad increased, it led to an increase in the inflow of remittances. This result is in line with our expectations (Table 3).

Nevertheless, once the family members permanently settled and get assimilated in the destination country or dependent family members joined, the inflow of remittances most significantly decreased. Our estimate supports this argument (Table 3). This inference was supported by New Immigrant Survey data which estimates that permanent Indian immigrants in the U.S. remit just two per cent of their income back home to their country. Unheim and Rowlands (2012) revealed that married immigrants remitted less money to their households back in the origin country settled in Canada.

Table 4. Estimated remittance equations-Dependent variable: Amount of remittances

Explanatory variables	Regression coefficient	β-value	Bivariate regression coefficient
Domestic per capita income at home	-0.418[NS] (-0.873)	-0.151[NS]	0.218[NS] (0.478)
Number of working members abroad	0.522[NS] (1.016)	0.062[NS]	1.146[***] (2.478)
Education level of the migrant	0.161[NS] (1.067)	0.060[NS]	0.439[***] (2.955)
Duration of stay of the migrant abroad	0.386[**] (1.98)	0.389[**]	0.178[***] (3.260)
Duration of stay of the migrant square	-0.009[NS] (-.089)	-0.268[NS]	0.004[**] (1.937)
Education of household head (Years of schooling)	0.121[NS] (1.250)	0.067[NS]	0.247[***] (2.471)
Sex of household head (Dummy: Male = 1, Female = 0)	-0.530[NS] (-0.648)	-0.033[NS]	1.343[NS] (1.511)
Relations abroad: (Dummy: Children and spouse = 1, Others = 0)	3.282[***] (2.983)	0.162[***]	2.903[***] (2.588)
Legal status of Migrant (Dummy: Illegal=1; Legal = 0)	2.705[**] (2.10)	0.172[**]	6.301[***] (7.819)
Destination country of Migrant(Developed countries = 1, Developing countries = 0)	3.8368[NS] (2.806)	0.243[***]	6.063[***] (7.446)
Settlement and Assimilation of migrants in host country (Dummy: Permanently settled and assimilated = 1, Otherwise = 0)	-2.104[***] (-0.112)	-0.112[NS]	0.263[NS] (0.251)
Intercept	-5.378[**] (-2.726)		
R^2		0.248	
No. of observations		323	

The regression coefficient and β-value of the duration of the stay of migrants and stay of migrants square were positive and negative respectively which indicated that remittances at the first increase and then subsequently decline with the time away of the migrants (Table 3). It should be noted that the implied turning point was some 16-20 years (Singh, 2011). There was a dwindling rise in remittances up to the turning point years, but there was a sharp decline in remittances after the turning point. It showed that most migrant members were robust remitters, at least for some middle years of their migration stay period. However, at the same time, after a very long time, some of the family migrants maintain a weak economic link with their family members at home. Lucas (2005) argued that there was an ambiguous relationship between the duration of migration and remittances. Glytsos (2001) found both a negative association between the amount remitted and duration of stay (which Glytsos dubs a 'permanent settlement syndrome') and also cases with a positive association (Glytsos's call it returns illusion). Glytsos (1988) found a positive association between time away and remittances from Germany to Greece but a negative association from the US to Greece. Merkle and Zimmerman (1992) found negative associations for remittances to several Mediterranean countries and found that remittances were significantly lowered the migrant reports intending to stay in Germany. The evidence from the Philippines indicated that remittances tend to rise initially with the duration of stay then ultimately decline. King (1997) reported that remittances declined after the first few years away and that migrants who had not yet established a family abroad remit more.

In contrast, Brown (1997) found a positive association between duration of stay and remittances in analyzing remittances to Samoa and Tonga. Our study contradicted studies of , Glytsos's (1988), Lucas (2005), Brown (1997), Glytsos (2001); Merkle and Zimmerman (1992).

There was a significant and positive relationship between the education of household heads and the inflow of remittances. It showed that migrants put full faith in their household heads that their remitted money was optimally utilized at home. Nevertheless, surprisingly, there was a weak though the positive relationship between the education of migrants and the inflow of remittances. In Kerala, educated migrants remit significantly more money than the less educated migrants (Zachariah, Mathew, & Rajan, 2000).

The wages and earnings were higher in the developed

countries than in developing countries. So, family migrants working in the developed countries would be earning a higher income and remitting a higher volume of remittances to their households than the migrants working in the developing countries. The regression and β coefficients indicated that family migrants working in the developed countries significantly remitted more money than those working in the developing countries (Table 3). Lucas (2005) noted that in India, it seemed remittances per migrant were approximately comparable from the Gulf and the US, despite the much higher education and income levels of those in the US. Our sample survey study of rural Punjab contradicted this Lucas hypothesis.

For analyzing the impact of the legal status of migrants in the destination country, we have classified the legal status of migrants into two categories; i.e., illegal and legal. The regression and Beta coefficients indicated that the illegal migrant households significantly get higher remittances than legal migrant households (Table 4).. It supported our hypothesis that illegal migrants remitted more money as compared to legal migrants. This study contradicted Lucas (1985), where it was found that legal migrants remitted more money than illegal migrants.

As argued earlier in this paper, migrant-sending remittances to his parent may involve the care of his parent and the intention of maintaining favour for the hope of inheritance. On average, children (particularly sons in the Punjabi society) were likely to inherit than other family members. Similarly, the spouse remitted money to take care of his family and accumulate assets in the origin country for their and their family's future security. Thus, both children and spouses remitted money due to altruistic and selfish motives. Thus, it was hypothesized that children and spouses more to families than other relations. Our result confirmed that children and spouses significantly remitted more than other relations.

CONCLUSIONS

The results revealed that higher domestic per capita income of migrant households reduced remittances. As the number of family migrants in the destination countries increased, it led to a higher volume of remittances. Migrant households who had their family migrants in developed countries received a higher volume of remittances than those households who had their family migrants in the developing countries. Illegal migrants send more remittances than legal migrants. When migrants settle down permanently in destination countries, they send fewer remittances back at home. The inflow of remittances falls with the increase in the

duration of stay of migrants in destination countries. Children and spouses send more remittances than other relatives due to strong altruistic motives. From the above findings, we can say that at the micro-level, remittances are a tool of equalizing income, and at the macro level, it reduces the foreign exchange constraints of a country and increases aggregate demand.

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